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national farmers union

In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Food Aid Untied—Canadian Farmers Punished For Mistakes of Others

Swift Current: Canadian farmers are being punished for the mistakes of others, says Stewart Wells, President of the National Farmers Union. Wells was commenting on the announcement this week by the federal government that aid organizations would no longer be required to purchase any Canadian foods for distribution.

“Over the years the National Farmers Union has asked government and aid organizations to publish a list of food purchases if Canadian aid was to become “untied” to Canadian farmers. The list would give Canadians and Canadian farmers some assurance that the foodstuffs were actually being purchased from farmers close to the affected regions and were not coming off of the nearest multinational boat in any given harbor. “

While others defended the wisdom of the commodity exchanges and the so-called “marketplace”, the NFU has been asking why the so-called “marketplace” was sending the wrong price signals (historically low farm-gate prices) to farmers around the world. Thousands of Canadian family farmers have been unnecessarily forced off of the land in the last five years by some of the worst farm-gate prices that farmers have ever seen. And this occurred at the same time as world food stocks have been falling to the now crisis levels.

While others talked about a “world glut” of grain, the NFU consistently tracked actual world food stocks and asked why the price of grains was so unnecessarily low when it was abundantly clear that the world was consuming more than farmers were producing. After talking with the non-responsive governments in Canada, two years ago the NFU wrote to the United Nations advocating an emergency meeting of world leaders in order to avoid a crisis. (This letter is still available at www.nfu.ca).

While others have supported the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization, and their course for restructuring—forcing farmers off the land all around the world and forcing the remaining farmers to plant crops destined for international trade instead of feeding people within the region— the NFU consistently advocated for regional food sovereignty and strong family farms.

While others have tried to defend the burning of food in vehicle gas tanks, the NFU has consistently questioned diverting vast quantities of valuable food to a questionable non-food purpose.

Instead of listening to the NFU and trying to avoid an international food crisis, the Canadian government is once again creating the opportunity for multinational food companies to benefit at the expense of Canadian farmers. In short, Canadian farmers are being falsely presented as the problem instead of the solution as millions wonder where their next meal is coming from.

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